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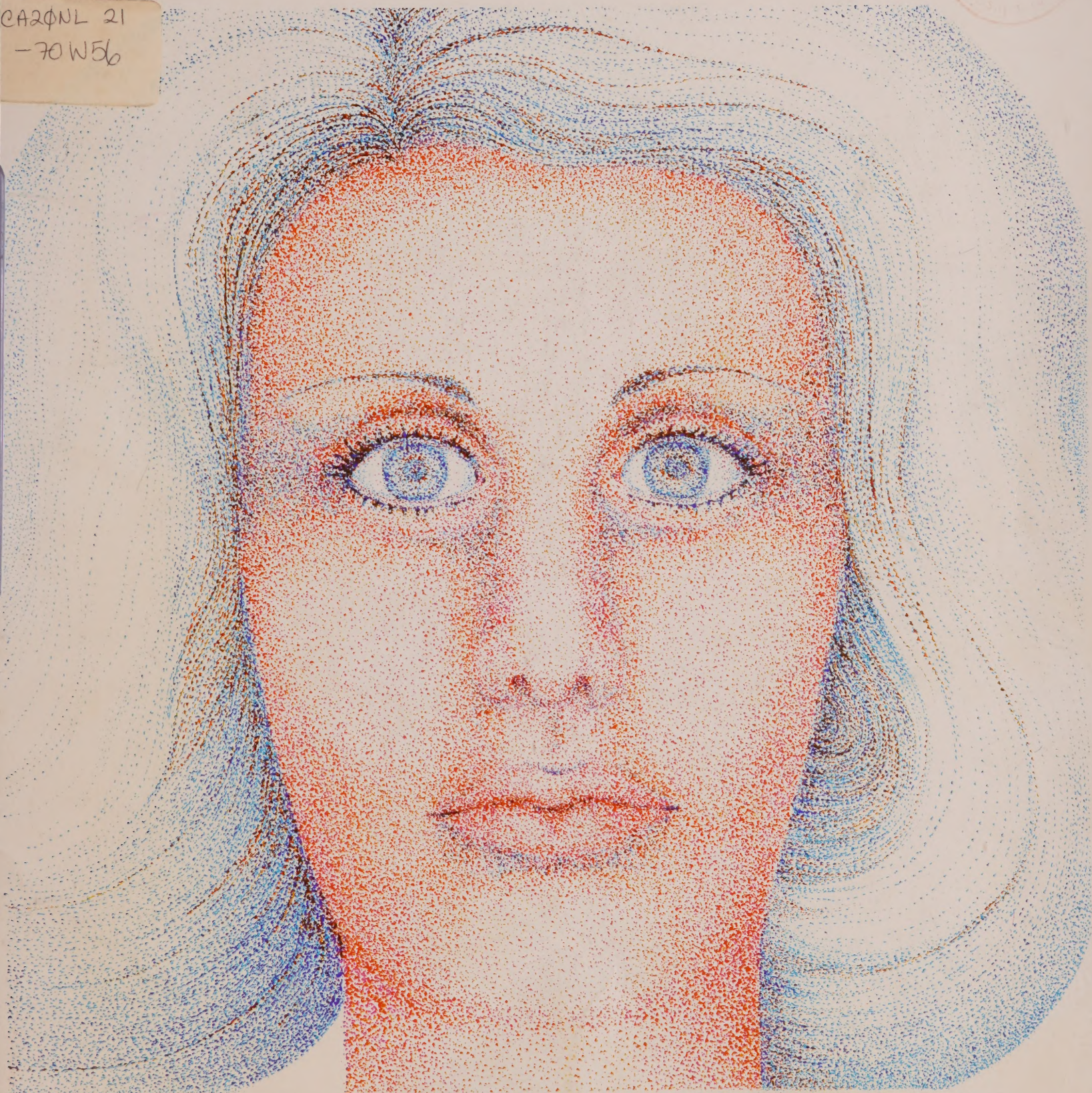
**Women
Returning to the Labour Force**

**A First Report
Women's Bureau Careers Centre**

*Ontario Women's Bureau
Labour Force Productivity*

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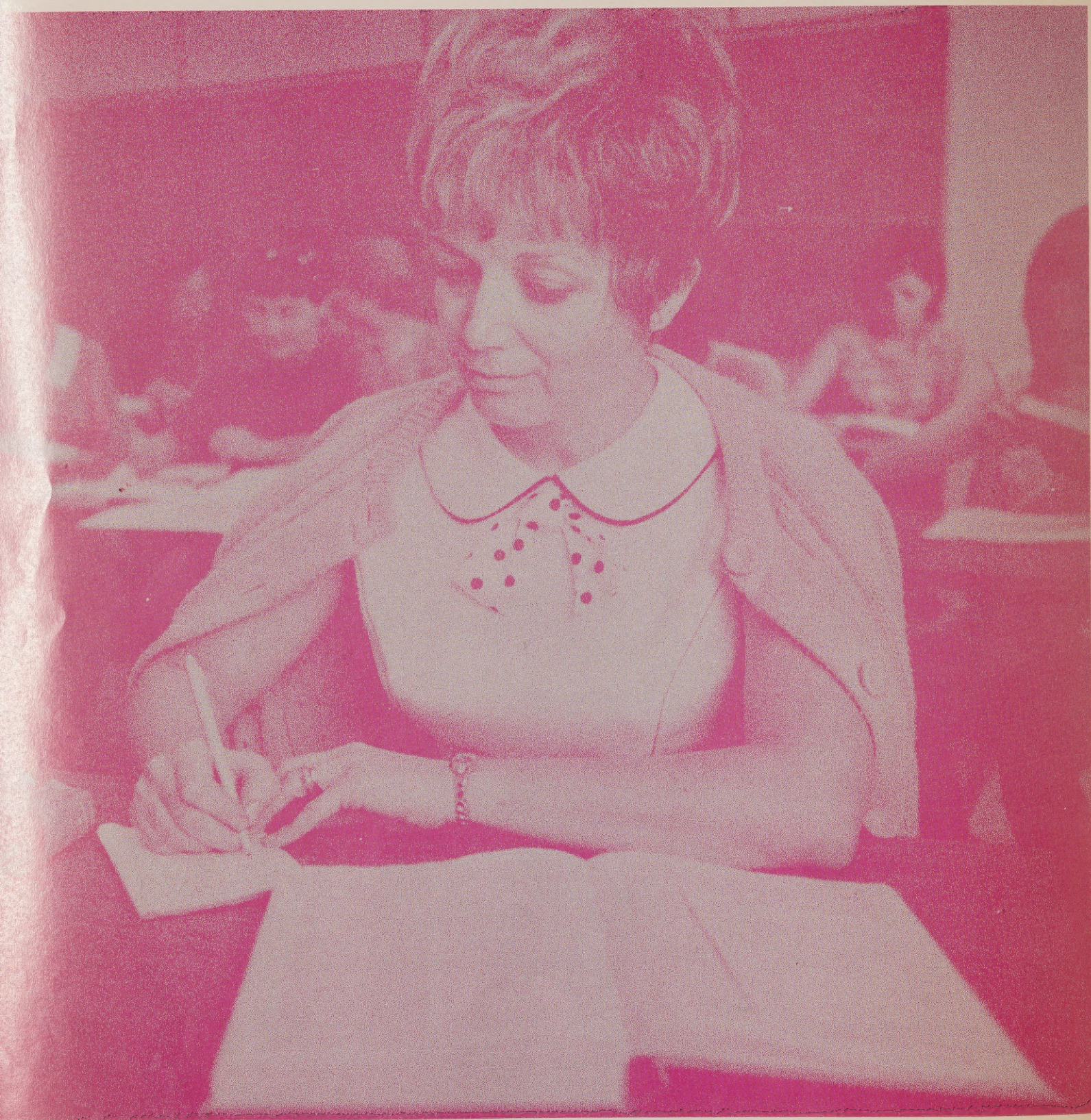
Women's Bureau

Ontario Department of Labour

[General publication.]
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**Women
Returning to the Labour Force**

**A First Report
Women's Bureau Careers Centre**



**A staff study prepared by
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**Ontario Department of Labour
Women's Bureau
Lita-Rose Betcherman, Ph.D.
Director**

**Hon. Dalton Bales, Q.C.,
Minister
Thomas M. Eberlee,
Deputy Minister**

The phenomenon of the labour market today is the legion of mature women who are returning to work after raising a family. This demographic fact has great implications not only for the labour force, where women over 35 already compose a sixth of the workers, but for Canadian society as a whole. The better to understand the effects of this change in female life styles, the Women's Bureau of the Ontario Department of Labour initiated an action-research program designed around an occupational counselling service for women entering or re-entering the labour force.

The Women's Bureau Careers Centre was opened in downtown Toronto in April, 1967. The need for such a counselling service was immediately demonstrated. Women who had been out of touch with the work world for some years came for information and advice on choosing a career or retraining for one; in two years of operation 732 women have been interviewed at the Careers Centre.

The service has been specially tailored for the relatively well-educated housewife who, typically, is firm but unfocused in her desire for a career. During an hour-long interview with a qualified counsellor, the client is helped to determine her interests, her marketable skills are analyzed, and she receives information on suitable training opportunities. A few months after her visit, a follow-up contact is made by telephone to see whether she has taken constructive steps towards the working world. Conducted by the original interviewer, the telephone follow-up evolves into a further counselling session. The client is given the opportunity of discussing current problems concerning her career planning and, at the same time, is reassured of the Centre's continuing interest in her.

Although the service is limited to high school graduates who have not been working for some years, no one is turned away empty-handed. Applicants who do not fit the requirements – for instance, workers who wish to change jobs – receive vocational information over the telephone or are referred to appropriate sources of help.

Begun as a pilot project in Metropolitan Toronto the Careers Centre has developed into a major function of the Women's Bureau. Inquiries from organizations

and individuals indicate that there are many women in other parts of the province who would like to take advantage of this counselling service. Accordingly, the program is gradually being extended to service women in communities outside Toronto. Moreover, in order to assist a wider range of prospective workers, educational requirements will be relaxed as the service grows.

As well as a service, the Careers Centre is set up as a research project. The clients willingly provide us with information about themselves. On entering the Centre, each woman fills out a questionnaire, and this documentation is supplemented by the counsellor's records of the initial interview and the telephone follow-up.

The present study is the first in a series based on data gathered at the Centre. Its purpose is to examine the career motivation and aspirations of the women who come for occupational counselling, the obstacles which stand in their path, and to assess in some measure their labour force potential. Hitherto, there has been much conjecture but little research about the "re-entry" to the labour force. We hope that Miss Bell's study will contribute some hard facts about this very important sector of the working population.

We would like to thank our specialist readers, Miss Marion Royce, Research Associate, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, and Mr. R. Michael Warren, Executive Director of the Manpower Services Division, Ontario Department of Labour. Any errors remain the responsibility of the Women's Bureau.

Lita-Rose Betcherman, Ph.D.
Director, Women's Bureau
Ontario Department of Labour

The mature educated woman is the newest kind of labour force candidate, one whose characteristic strengths and weaknesses are still shrouded in common myths. Chapter One introduces the *typicalis personae*: the mature educated women who come to the Woman's Bureau Careers Centre for career information and guidance.

The Careers Centre interviews provide a wealth of data concerning the common characteristics of mature women and the range of variation among them as individuals. By way of summarizing and visualizing the main outlines of the descriptive material, it is possible to construct an imaginary 'typical' client. This is done by selecting the most common characteristic qualities of the group and combining them to make a composite profile. In some studies, the use of this procedure would result in something unrecognizable, but in this case, the 'composite woman' personifies the impression of the counsellor. It produces a meaningful image.

The 'typical' woman is of Canadian origin, 41 years old, and married. She lives in the Northern residential area of Toronto with her husband and three children. Her husband is a professional, better educated than she is, and he earns between \$10,000 and \$15,000 a year. The children are just reaching high school age, the youngest one almost 10 and the eldest, 16.

She herself is in good health, and, although not particularly nervous or unstable, she expresses her lack of self-confidence in relation to the working world in a variety of ways. She has a slightly better than average school education (completed almost 25 years ago), and some rusty and out-of-date office skills. Her original work experience is far behind her.

Over several volunteer jobs she has held, most have been rank-and-file positions related to her children's extra-curricular school and community activities.

Recently, she has worked at occasional or temporary jobs but she has not made any organized vocational plans. This is the 'typical' Careers Centre client.

There were, of course, many variations around this 'typical' pattern. Not all the women were still married, not all of them had children, and some of them had much lower family incomes. As a general rule, exceptions were in the direction of better education, more training skills, fewer but younger children, and more responsible volunteer service.



Introducing the Careers Centre Client

More than 400 clients were interviewed at the Careers Centre between April, 1967 and April, 1968. From these, a research sample of 300 clients was selected. This sample included all of the Centre's clients who were over 29 years old; were married or once-married; possessed an education either equal to or above the Ontario Grade 12 level; and had not been regularly employed during the past two years. Younger clients who were younger, unmarried, less educated or recently employed were excluded from the research sample. This sample was not intended to be representative of all mature women considering careers outside the home. Its members were distinctive in their education; lack of recent job experience; their background; and their willingness to seek professional counselling. It is also possible that the service may have attracted a certain kind of woman at its inception than it will be in the future. It is better known. Despite the special distinctions noted above, the sample is reasonably representative of mature educated women who have been out of the labour force for some time, and who are seeking professional help in making their career decisions.

Age

Table 1
Distribution of Clients

Age	Per Cent of Sample
30-34	10%
35-39	27%
40-44	25%
45-49	19%
50 and over	18%
Total	100%*

The women ranged in age from 30 to 67. Over half were between 35 and 45 and the average age was 40. More than a third were older than 45 but only one was over 60.

Family Characteristics

Marital Status

Eighty-six per cent of the sample were married women living with their husbands. Generally, they had married between the ages of 20 and 25, had been married for more than 10 years and had children. Although several questions in the interview touched upon aspects of husband-wife relationships, such as the husband's attitude toward his wife's work plans, only nine women mentioned any kind of marital friction. In three of these cases this friction seemed to be of minor importance. At the time of the follow-up survey, conducted several months after the original interview, there had been three separations and one divorce. In the overall picture, therefore, there was little evidence of pressing marital difficulties.

Fourteen per cent of the sample were widowed, separated or divorced at the time that they were first interviewed. More often than not, this marital status

was recent, having occurred less than a year before the interviews. Women who were no longer married tended to have lower incomes than the others and fewer dependent children.

2. Husbands' Education

More than half the women were married to men with formal education on the same level as their own. While 35 per cent had husbands better educated than themselves, just 10 per cent were married to men with less education. Most of the men were ahead of their wives in recent education because of special training programs or continuing education related to their employment.

3. Husbands' Occupation

Many of the clients gave general job titles such as 'industrial supervisor' or 'manager' when asked about their husbands' occupation. In the absence of further information we made a rough breakdown into three main categories: the professionals, the executives and managers and the technicians and craftsmen. The first two categories took in more than half the sample, a fact which indicates the middle to upper-class status that the clients claimed by virtue of their family group.

The professional category was the largest, accounting for 31 per cent of the husbands, including the ones who were no longer living with their wives.

Engineers were the largest group within the professional category. They were followed, in order of decreasing number, by teachers, accountants, doctors, lawyers, ministers and consultants. A wide variety of other occupations fell into the same category, including one geographer, two veterinarians, two architects and a pharmacist.

In the executives and managers category (23 per cent) most of the men held the title of 'Vice President and General Manager'. Like the professionals, their income ranged from \$5,000 to \$30,000 per year. The remainder of this group held some similar title such as 'Vice President in Charge of Sales'.

The third largest group were the technicians and craftsmen, who accounted for 8 per cent of the clients' husbands. Among them were housepainters, electricians and repairmen. Their annual income ranged from under \$3,000 to over \$10,000.

The remaining occupations included several 'businessmen', a musician, an army officer and other diverse occupational titles which were not specific enough to classify. These amounted to over 30 per cent of the sample; a fact which reflects both the range of occupations involved and the vagueness of the usual occupational designations. There were three husbands listed as unemployed and five retired.

Although a few of the men's occupations could have been carried on in rural areas, most were not. Only one husband was a farmer. This supports our general impression that the women who came to us from outside the city proper were, despite their place of residence, products of an urban rather than rural economic environment.

4. Number and Ages of Children

The bulk of the clients, two-thirds of the total, had between two and three children each. Only 5 per cent had never had any children and an equivalent group had families of five or more.

Table 2
Number of Children

None	5%
One	12%
Two	29%
Three	37%
Four	11%
Five or more	5%
Total	100%*

The age of her youngest child often seemed to be a significant factor in a woman's decision to go to work. Contrary to expectations, however, a far higher proportion of the clients had children in elementary school than in secondary school. Twenty-five per cent had pre-school children, 41 per cent had grade school children, 18 per cent had adolescents, usually in high school, and 11 per cent had young adults. (The remaining 5 per cent were those with no children). Thus, only a third of the clients were either at or near the 'empty nest' stage of family life.

The specific age of the youngest child did appear to have some effect on the timing of the mother's work decisions. It seems that there were certain stages in the children's lives at which the women felt moved to plan for their eventual return to work. Clusters of clients had youngest children at the ages of 3, 6, 8 and 11. Conversely, few of the clients had youngest children aged 1, 2, 10 or 14. This suggests that child development stages influence a mother's decision to go to work, but more research is needed to substantiate and clarify the nature of this relationship.

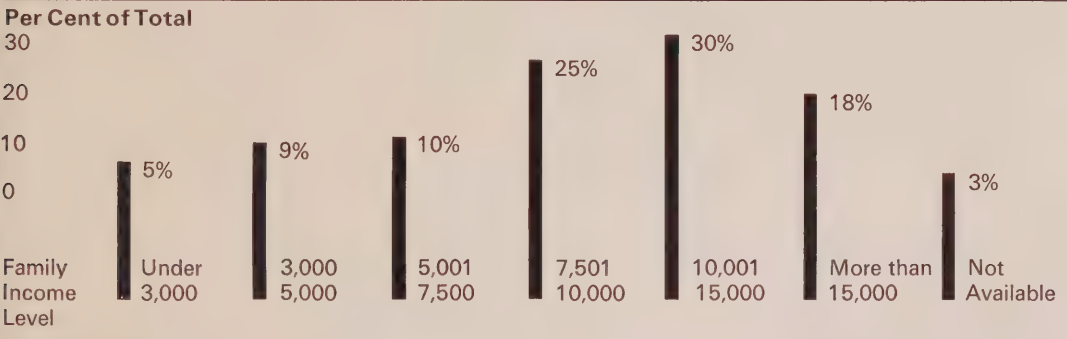
Taking the age of the oldest child as a quick index of the length of time that the client had been in the role of 'mother', this was seen to range up to 41 years. On the average each woman in the sample had spent 16 years being a mother, no matter what other activities she may have undertaken at the same time.

5. Family Income Level

There were few wealthy families in the sample and even fewer poor ones, with the largest percentage reporting income between \$10,000 and \$15,000 a year. Most married women reported a family income above the \$10,000 level, while most once-married women reported less than \$5,000.

*Including 1% rounding error

Table 3
Percentage Distribution of Clients by Family Income Level



6. Place of Residence

As expected, the clients were drawn almost entirely from the Toronto area. The majority were attracted to the service by advertisements placed in Toronto newspapers, and the service itself was located in the central city. However, certain residential districts were much better represented than others. Almost three-quarters of those who lived within the city limits came from homes in the north-central residential area; and almost half of those from beyond the city lived in Willowdale or Don Mills.

7. Country of Origin

A rough indication of the clients' country of origin is obtained from the location of their high school education. By this index, 72 per cent were Canadian, 13 per cent British, 7 per cent European, 5 per cent American and 1 per cent Asian. Another 2 per cent were from other or unspecified countries.

Educational Qualifications

Formal Education

The majority of the clients had completed their formal education 20 or even 30 years ago. More than 80 per cent had completed it before 1950, and 30 per cent of them finished before 1940.

Just over a quarter were university graduates, and fully a third of the sample had experienced some form of university education. (This compares with more than half of their husbands).

Table 4
Clients' Education

High school	35%
Post-secondary commercial	16%
Post-secondary professional or semi-professional	20%
University	26%
Post-graduate	3%
Total	100%

Despite the increasing availability and importance of education for women, particularly those living in urban areas, younger clients were not significantly better educated than older ones. Qualitative dif-

ferences between age groups were found only at the university level. In general, a larger proportion of the younger college-trained women had taken post-graduate education of four-year university courses. The older graduates had taken less lengthy courses and more of them had taken secretarial training after university.

In all age groups the women had been traditional in their selection of courses. Of those who went to university, the majority had taken general arts courses. The next largest group had taken professional training such as nursing, physiotherapy or home economics. General science courses had been completed by three or four clients, and a comparable number had acquired training in economics, psychology and sociology. None had tried to enter 'male' fields such as engineering, law or business administration.

Most of those who had not gone to university had taken general high school courses. Of these, almost two-thirds had taken at least some commercial training, either with or immediately following their high school education.

In general, the women had not chosen education that was vocationally-oriented except for the traditional fields of nursing, teaching and secretarial science. They had not taken subjects which would qualify them for responsible positions in traditionally 'male' occupations or in new occupations, such as data processing, which have since opened up.

Further Education

Almost half of the sample (43 per cent) had taken part in continuing education. As could be expected, this was generally much more recent than their last formal education, but even so more than half of them had not studied within the past ten years. Only a handful – five or six clients – were actively engaged in continuing education at the time of their interview.

Most of those who had at some time participated in continuing education had shown vocational orientation. Only 18 per cent of them had taken nothing

but 'personal interest' courses, such as clay modelling or silk screening. The remaining 82 per cent were evenly divided between those who had chosen training for office work (mostly typing, but also book-keeping, accountancy practice, and stenography) and those who had taken other vocational courses such as commercial art, social welfare or journalism.

Table 5
Types of Continuing Education

A. Vocationally Relevant	82%
Commercial courses	41%
Non-university training	2%
University non-credit	20%
University credit	19%
B. Not Vocationally Relevant	18%
Personal interest	18%
Total	100%

Vocational courses appear to have become increasingly popular, at least with respect to this type of candidate. Women who had last taken part in continuing education over 10 years ago had more often chosen 'personal interest' courses, particularly the 'do-it-yourself' kind, than those whose participation was more recent.

Despite the large number who had engaged in education which provided potentially useful skills, there was little evidence of vocational planning. In all but two or three cases, there had been no progression from one level of continuing education to another; no sequence of related courses; no concentration in one field of interest.

Volunteer Experience

Eighty per cent of the women reported some type of volunteer experience. They had participated in everything from ambulance driving to opera singing. Almost half of the volunteers had held positions requiring dependability but little leadership or initiative. One quarter had held highly responsible leadership positions.

Older women had naturally accumulated more volunteer experience than younger ones. They had held a greater variety of positions and had spent more time in them. However, looking at the volunteer records for just the past five years it is apparent that in all age groups little more than half of the clients were involved in recent volunteer work.

The most common fields of volunteer activities, in order of importance, were hospital auxiliary, youth work, church group activities, and home and school organizations. Other activities often mentioned during the interview included canvassing for a charity or political party and holding responsible positions in community and social organizations.

Most of the women had, at one time or another, participated in child-related volunteer activities, such as Brownies or a parent-teacher organization. Their tendency to move out of the youth and school-related fields as their children grew suggests that

form of volunteer work is more appropriately added as an extension of the mother role than as a kind of substitute employment. Their level of education made almost no difference in the degree of responsibility. An unexpected finding, in the light of modern stereotypes, was that university-educated women were involved in church-related volunteer activities twice as often, proportionately, as those with non-university education. Graduates were half as likely to report activity in purely social organizations, such as bridge clubs.

Clients were asked to list any skills that they could offer to an employer. Seventy per cent were able to name at least one potentially marketable skill, although many were 'rusty', frequently qualified by an admission that the skill was 'too rusty' for immediate use. There was considerable overlap between skill categories, and many women mentioned more than one skill. Four per cent had 'trained skills', including teaching and various kinds of laboratory experience. Overlapping with these, 45 per cent named some degree of office skills (mostly 25 per cent felt that they had 'social skills', experience in working through others, skill in dealing with children, or public speaking experience). Six per cent claimed special competence in work such as creative writing, speech-writing, or technical reports. Only six women mentioned other creative skills, such as art and clothing. In most cases, the counsellor had no purely objective way to assess whether the client was under-estimating her skills.

In addition to the skills which the clients were asked to name, we can also infer from their original educational attainment and from their recent involvement in educational and community activities that they possess above average capacity for learning and a developmental maturity, both of which lend themselves to successful employment.

The second question designed to elicit from the clients any personal attributes useful to an employer produced surprisingly few answers. More than half of the women listed the ability to organize, and most of these also felt they were good at 'getting along with people.' Self-discipline, punctuality, efficiency, imagination and the like were scarcely mentioned.

The clients were also asked to describe any personal characteristics which might hinder their employment. Although only 64 per cent of them listed any difficulty of this kind, their answers to this question were more complete and freer than to the previous one. It seems that they had given more thought to their drawbacks than to their employment strengths. Lack of self-confidence (17 per cent) headed their list and was usually associated with 'lack of experience'. It was followed by lack of self-discipline (9 per cent); inability to organize well (9 per cent); over-sensitivity (5 per cent); and difficulty with the English language (1 per cent). Idiosyncratic problems ranged from a strong dislike of supervision to a tendency to worry about the children; from

impulsiveness to impatience. Over half of the women in the sample said they had no difficulties or did not answer the question.

There was, however, an enthusiastic minority, amounting to approximately 15 per cent of the sample, whose cheerful self-assessment was in strong contrast to the generally neutral or pessimistic tone set by the others. One self-rating typical of this group reads as follows: "I am orderly and articulate with quick intelligence, boundless energy, initiative, wide scope of interests, humour, awareness, meticulousness, organization, drive, conscientiousness, reliability, joie de vivre . . .".

The self-ratings probably reveal differences in attitudes, self-perception and 'salesmanship' more than actual differences in ability.

Health: Physical and Mental Fitness

The clients were asked to report any physical or mental health difficulties which might be problems in getting and holding a job. Altogether, only 20 per cent mentioned any. Most of these felt that a proper choice of job would avoid whatever difficulties they had. Just 18 clients felt that their lack of stamina was a problem, 15 admitted emotional or nervous instability, and 29 reported some form of minor physical disability such as varicose veins, arthritis, a tendency to stutter or recent minor surgery. Not surprisingly, older women mentioned more health problems than the younger ones, but nervousness was mentioned by old and young alike.

Previous Work Experience

Over 90 per cent of the women had been employed at some period in their lives. The predominant pattern of their work records shows that they customarily held their highest-skilled, most regular employment before marriage and later slipped into lower-level, part-time or intermittent employment. In most cases their work for pay became very irregular or ceased altogether after the birth of the first child. Throughout the early era of their marriage they had treated work as an 'extra' and had dropped it when it conflicted with being a mother. The women averaged nearly three different employers each, ranging from no jobs to nine different ones. Women close to 40 had held more jobs, on the average, than those who were older or younger.

Recent Work Experience

Table 6
Date of Last Employment

1960-1967	50%
1950-1959	33%
1949 and earlier	17%

A striking and unexpected finding was that half of the women had had part-time or temporary employment experience within the last decade, most of them within the past two years. All clients who had

recently held regular or full-time employment had been screened out so that most of the job experience reported was a matter of a few weeks as a sales clerk at Christmas or helping out once a week in a drug-store. It was the counsellor's impression that few of the women had had recent experience which was directly related to the jobs they hoped to have.

Types of Occupations

There was a great diversity of former occupations. Not only did the women differ from each other, but many had individually sampled a variety of types of employment. Most of the sample, about 59 per cent, had held jobs which were basically classified as 'clerical and sales' even though many of them had taken other types of education. Those in this type of work had worked at it an average of almost 14 years each. Just over half of them listed their positions as 'typists', 'general office worker', or 'clerk'. The remainder were mainly stenographers, receptionists, and saleswomen. Also included in this category were a few key-punch operators, a bank teller, and a switchboard operator.

Professional and semi-professional occupations formed the second largest category, accounting for 29 per cent of the total. This category included 33 teachers, 12 nurses, 12 welfare workers, eight dietitians, and four librarians. They had worked in these positions an average of four years each. Twenty-three other individual professional and semi-professional occupations were mentioned, including sociologists and professional opera singer.

Technical occupations such as laboratory technician, chemical analyst, research assistant and repair service representative were reported by only 10 per cent of the women. Those who had worked in these jobs had worked an average of six years each.

Other occupations mentioned but not classified here included florists, newspaper reporters, store managers, real estate agents, and several fashion consultants.

This completes our description of the women's background characteristics: their age, family life, education, volunteer experience, special skills and previous work experience. In the next chapter we take a close look at the motivations and aspirations underlying their interest in employment and their decision to seek counselling.

main reasons for going to work, most of them financial in nature, were common among the Careers Centre clients. Chief among these were the need for work as an outside interest, as a chance to be useful, or as a separate area for personal development. These motives were all to some extent related to the need to replace diminishing family responsibilities with meaningful activity. Only a few saw work as a challenge, or as a type of activity comparable to homemaking. Even fewer saw it as a way to meet people or as a kind of mental therapy. From the clients' point of view, employment seemed to have many long-term advantages for self-education and development, for family security and status, and for community service. These advantages could be readily balanced against the immediate short-term inconveniences. The views of the clients at the Careers Centre fit the stereotyped image of the dynamic, competitive, modern 'new woman.' Most claimed to enjoy their roles as mothers, wives, and homemakers, and were fully involved in them. They saw their present family involvement as temporary, though. As their children grew up, the clients' remaining domestic and wifely duties did not make use of their time, energy and intelligence. Outside work too often seemed to be unchallenging and boring, and it did not appeal to them. Sometimes, employment was sought, not as an addition to family life, but as a meaningful voluntary activity. Initially, the women had not yet directed their efforts toward a specific kind of work when they sought career counselling. They had focused on the relationship between outside work and their family responsibilities, particularly on whether or not they would have time and opportunity to work; but they had not relied on the labour force itself for the opportunities available. Few had clear ideas about the kinds of work which corresponded to their interests, skills and level of commitment, or about suitable and available training. Those who did have some idea of their goals tended to be attracted by the traditional 'female' fields of work, such as teaching, social work, child care. These choices indicate that they were still particularly interested in the type of services that women used to provide for kinfolk and neighbours, before the locus of their activities shifted into the labour force. The clients had a fairly high level of aspirations. Positions which attracted their interest tended to be those which carried professional or semi-professional status, and consequently required specialized training as well as a good general education. At the same time, they were usually reluctant to commit themselves to long-term, full-time or expensive training courses, and many were unwilling to be hesitant to accept full-time work assignments in the immediate future. These aspects of their motivation tended to delay their plans or lower their aspirations, but did not remove their strong and continuing desire for meaningful employment.



Reasons for Going to Work

motivations and aspirations of labour force can-
tes can be discovered and measured in a variety
ays. One of the most profitable means of
vering the clients' motives was by consideration
needs and objectives that they hoped to
t by working.
hen asked to describe their reasons and objectives
eturning to work, the clients answered that they
ed to obtain one or more of the objectives listed in
1. A close look at each of these objectives sheds
on the common needs and desires which lay
l their individual decisions to seek work.
1 provides a rough indication of the relative
nce of each type of motive, according
percentage of the women who mentioned it.
women gave three or more of these reasons,
thers mentioned only one. It is very probable
percentages in each case would have been
the clients had been given a check-list type
ion instead of a free, unprompted opportunity
as their reasons for going to work.

in Objectives Reported as Reasons for
Employment.

Objective	Percentage of Sample	
	Mentioned	Not Mentioned
Financial	87%	13%
Outside interest	38%	62%
Chance to be useful	25%	75%
Replacement for family duties	24%	76%
Increase in personal independence	20%	80%
Search for a new challenge	8%	92%
Preferred activity	6%	94%
Companionship	3%	97%
Emotional therapy	3%	97%
Financial	43%	57%
Income	43%	57%

Relative Importance of Financial and
Financial Reasons for Work

women placed great emphasis on non-financial
ons for work. This type of reason was not only
ted twice as often as the financial kind, it was
far more likely to be the *only* motivation men-
ned. While just 13 per cent of the women said
y wanted work for financial reasons and no other
d, 57 per cent said they wanted work solely for its
a financial rewards. Among the remaining 30 per
at, the majority explicitly stated that although
ome mattered, it was the least important factor
luencing their decision.

Non-Financial Reasons for Seeking Work

Among the non-financial reasons for work there were
eight distinct types of work objectives. These were
objectives for work as
1. an outside interest,
2. a chance to be useful,
3. a replacement for declining family duties,
4. an increase in personal independence,
5. search for a new challenge,
6. a preferred kind of activity,
7. companionship, and
8. emotional therapy.
The following paragraphs deal with each of these
objectives in detail, describing its general nature, prob-
able sources, and its relationship with other motives.

1. An Outside Interest

The need for an outside interest was the most
frequently mentioned non-financial reason for work-
ing. Thirty-eight per cent of the women said they
wanted employment as an interest outside the home
that would help to fill the time on their hands and
that would keep them busy, interested and active.
Women in this category tended to be relatively
passive in outlook. They wanted 'some stimulation
from outside', 'something to interest me' and 'some-
thing to fill the empty hours.' 'Time on my hands' was
a key phrase repeatedly used by these women, who
varied a great deal in the extent to which they were
willing to reach out and work towards a new kind
of occupation.
Women who were mothers of children under 10
tended to stress the need for an interest to keep them
from mental stagnation. They were busy enough, it
seems, but bored. Women whose children were older
usually said they wanted an outside interest because
they no longer had enough to do. Some claimed
they did household chores more often than necessary
or over-mothered their children in order to fill the
time. Women who wanted work as an outside interest
were not just the older or wealthier women; they
came equally from all segments of the sample.

2. A Chance to be Useful

The second most commonly cited non-financial
reason for working was the need for a chance to make
a purposeful, productive and socially useful contribu-
tion. One quarter of the women gave this reason.
They were not necessarily bored or inactive at home,
but they particularly wanted to be 'of service to others',
'to make a more significant contribution to the com-
munity' and 'to contribute beyond myself and
my family.'
The degree of emphasis placed on 'usefulness'
varied considerably. About two-thirds of the group
seemed to be looking for work that would be useful
mainly in a limited sense of the word. It would be more
than just 'part of the social round', 'doing good in bits
and pieces' or a 'needless repetition of a lot of un-
necessary chores.' At least a third of them went
further, however, by saying that they wanted to fulfil
their responsibility to the community because of their
educational advantages, or wanted employment
because it seemed to be the best way of making a
truly disciplined contribution to others or society.

Membership in groups which stressed making use
of education seems to have had some part in creating
or strengthening this type of motive. For example,
three of the nine women who mentioned that they
belonged to the University Women's Club reported
that their decision to work was influenced by the
club or by its literature about 'using your education'.
In the same way, some volunteer groups had
encouraged the belief that paid employment was the
best way to use valuable skills. Several women who
had been working in responsible volunteer positions
told us that 'the others' had convinced them that they
should find a 'real' job.

3. Declining Family Duties

Third in our list of frequently mentioned non-financial
motives was the decline of maternal responsibilities
and activities. Almost a quarter of the clients, many
of them still quite young, said they wanted to find
work (or at least plan for it) because they saw that
their children were growing more independent and
that their home duties were declining. 'I realize', said
one woman with two teen-aged sons, 'that I must
now make a life for myself. . . my children require me
much less, and I need to feel that I have some value.'

Table 2
Percentage of Clients who Mentioned
Declining Family Responsibilities, by the Age
of the Youngest Child

Age of Youngest Child	Clients Mentioning Declining Responsibilities
1-4	19%
5-12	21%
13-19	31%
20 +	22%
None	20%

The 'empty nest', as this stage is often called, was
most frequently reported by women whose children
were teen-aged, but was a common motive within
the sample as a whole. Mothers of children actually
old enough to be independent were less likely to
mention it than the mothers of teen-agers, perhaps
because it was a problem which they had already
faced, or possibly because they found the 'empty nest'
not as bad in reality as was the anticipation of it.
Declining responsibilities resulted not only from
the growing independence of children, but also from
changes in the family life, for example the move from
a large house to an apartment, the arrival of a mother-
in-law to help out, or a change which reduced the
woman's participation in her husband's business.
Three of the 15 women who had not had any children
mentioned changes such as these, and even some
of those who still had young children at home found
that similar changes had increased their freedom and
had thus encouraged them to participate in activities
beyond the home.
Several secondary reasons for wanting to work
were connected with the basic reason of declining
family responsibilities. The desire for personal in-
dependence, for example, was sometimes based on

the feeling that ‘having a new life of my own will make it easier to watch the children grow up and leave our home.’ Similarly, the desire for ‘an outside interest’, a ‘challenge’, or a ‘feeling of usefulness’ was often openly attributed to a decline of satisfying activities in the home. In fact, almost all non-financial reasons for working show some connection or overlap with this category. Even the desire for income was sometimes indirectly related to it.

4. Personal Development

Twenty per cent of the women wanted employment in order to have an extra area of life in which they could express themselves as individuals and enjoy some independence and personality growth. At the very least, they could practice being better groomed, better dressed, and more self-confident. At most, it would make them more interesting to their husbands and children – more exciting and more ‘with it’. All but two of these women were careful to describe this independent personal development as a supplement or contribution to their life at home, rather than an alternative to it.

5. Less Common Motives

Four less common motives for work were identified – work as a challenge, a preferred activity, a chance to be with people and as a form of therapy. Each of these had considerable importance in a limited number of cases.

The first two objectives, work as a challenge and as a preferred activity, seem particularly significant because they are the primary motivational attitudes associated with the conception of today’s ‘new woman’.

However, only 8 per cent of the women wanted work specifically as a challenge to their abilities and frequently these were the same women who had listed the desire to use skills, training and abilities in a ‘socially useful’ way. A mere 6 per cent wanted employment because they valued work for its own sake, enjoyed a particular type of work, or preferred the office to the home.

Just slightly over 3 per cent of the sample saw work as basically a chance to meet and be with people, and only 3 per cent wanted work as a form of therapy to help a mental problem or meet a personal crisis. Three women of the latter group had suffered recent bereavement; two were referred from a psychiatric agency; and the remaining five had marital difficulties. The discovery that less than 2 per cent of the sample wanted work specifically because of a broken or unhappy marriage, while only three other women even mentioned marital difficulties, suggests that marital problems might be a much less significant factor in women’s decision to work than has often been assumed.

As a further commentary on non-financial motivation it should be noted that almost all of the women clearly stated that the decision to seek work was contingent upon the ‘state of things at home.’ When asked how they would like to see themselves ten years from now, more than half of them hoped that they would be as happy then as they were in the

present, actively employed, and still playing a positive role in the well-being of their families. When asked about their husband’s attitude and involvement, all but a half dozen of those whose marriages were intact indicated that they had a marital relationship strong enough to handle the necessary adjustments to work without suffering serious strain. These women, far from being the kind who are most dissatisfied with motherhood and home, appear to have derived great satisfaction from their home responsibilities and seem to feel they have a great deal to lose as their children grow up.

Financial Reasons for Work

The fact that almost half of the clients had a family income over \$10,000 helps to explain why only slightly less than half of them, 43 per cent, mentioned the influence of any kind of financial need as being involved in their motivation. Forty-five women specified why the extra income was desired. Twenty of these reported that their husbands were ill, approaching retirement, planning separation, or otherwise becoming less adequate or less reliable providers. Ten said they wanted to ensure higher education for their children. Other financial motives included the fear of becoming a ‘parasite’, the desire to afford travel, the ‘rising cost of living’, and the desire ‘to earn a salary of my own.’ As in other studies, money appeared to have many meanings, depending on what it was intended to buy: whether material goods, or security, or status, or self-worth.

Almost two-thirds of those who mentioned income as their reason for work did not provide further explanation. It was notable, however, that among the sample as a whole, women whose family income was low, who were over 45, or who had a pre-school child at home were most likely to mention finances among their motives.

The level of family income seemed to be the most important of these three factors. At each successively lower income level the proportion of women mentioning financial motives grew substantially larger. From just 25 per cent of the most affluent clients, it rose to nearly 50 per cent of those in the middle income group and to over 90 per cent of the least affluent ones. Also women in the lowest income group more often gave income as their *only* reason for seeking work. The middle and upper income clients were much more likely to give a combination of several reasons.

Older women gave monetary reasons for seeking work more often than the younger ones. The number mentioning money increased from a third of those under 45 to nearly half of those between 45 and 50 to almost two-thirds of those over 50. The effects of increasing age were accentuated by the income factor because a larger proportion of the older women had low incomes – 29 per cent of the women over 50 were in the lowest income group in contrast with just 11 per cent of the younger ones. Even within each income level, however, older women were still

slightly more likely to give income as their main or only reason for work.

Women whose children were not yet old enough to be in school even part of the day mentioned financial objectives almost twice as often as the women whose youngest children had reached primary school age. This was so despite the fact that very few of them were planning to accept work until their children were older.

Table 3
Per cent of Clients who Mentioned Financial Motives, by the Age of the Youngest Child

Age of the Youngest Child	Per Cent Giving Financial Motives
Up to 4	60%
5-12	33%
13-19	35%
20 +	59%
None	40%

The popularity of financial reasons among women with very young children is attributable not only to the heavy financial obligations which begin with the arrival of new children, but also to the fact that financial need is one of the few generally ‘socially acceptable’ reasons for a young mother to even think about employment.

Other Dimensions of Motivation

In addition to the clients’ express reasons for wanting to work, their occupational directedness, choice of work field, level of aspirations, and basic realism were found to be significant descriptive dimensions of motivation. In each of these areas the clients showed characteristics which set them apart from other types of potential labour force candidates.

Occupational Directedness

Although most of the women were able to tell us why they wanted employment, few were directed toward any specific occupation. Only 17 arrived at their interview having already chosen both a particular occupation and a specific field (for example, nursing in a children’s home, teaching home economics in a high school, or becoming a school psychologist). Sixty women were quite directed about the type of work they wanted, for example a middle management position in a large organization, but were unfocused or undecided about the field. Another 64 women mentioned one or more fields of special interest, such as education or social welfare, but needed more information about specific jobs within them. The remaining 159 women (63 per cent) could only tell us that they wanted work which was appropriate to their background or which could satisfy their needs for income, interest, usefulness or similar goals. They were vague about what kind of work this might be.

Even when previous work experience was not related to their current aspirations, those who had

arked recently were more likely to know, at least roughly, what kind of work they wanted.

Choice of Work Field
mentioned earlier, only 17 clients were initially able to name the specific occupation that they wanted. Their choices were as follows: speech therapist, nurse, nurse's aide, school psychologist, dance teacher, home economics teacher, librarian (women), placement interviewer, child welfare worker (3 women), journalist, editor of a magazine (children, laboratory technician and computer operator. The reader will note that most of the occupations fall within the traditional 'women's' sphere of employment. A total of 118 identifiable occupational choices were mentioned as possible careers by the undecided women in the sample. Table 4 shows that teaching and social welfare were the most favoured fields, followed by public relations and household arts, such as dressmaking, interior decorating, baking and visiting homemaker.

Occupational Interests Mentioned by Clients Prior to Counselling	
Child welfare	23%
Public relations	23%
Household arts (dressmaking, visiting, baker, chef)	12%
Work (secretarial-clerical)	11%
Work	9%
Editing and editing	8%
Research, real estate, computer work, nursing and chiropody)	5%
	8%

Of the 159 women who had little or no idea what they wanted, 89 per cent were classified as being mainly interested in people, rather than ideas or things. Also, 'ability to get along with people' and 'personal competence in child care' were frequently mentioned by them as skills which might be of value to an employer. It seems that the employment that these women seek is a continuation of the kind of work mature women have always done, either for kin or through volunteer groups. They no longer expect that they can find this kind of constructive and meaningful work unless they undertake paid employment outside the home.

Level of Aspirations
Level of aspirations was indicated in three different ways. First, by the kind of employment that the women hoped to attain; second, by the kind and amount of educational investment they were willing to make; and third, by the nature of their work commitment, whether full-time or part-time, permanent or temporary.

1. Kind of Employment
At the conclusion of the interview, the counsellor made an assessment of the kind of work that the client would try to find. It was often difficult to ascertain this level accurately because most of the clients were planning to investigate more than one possible employment choice. Thus Table 5, which shows the distribution of employment aims according to the counsellor's assessment, is really only an approximation.

Table 5
Kind of Employment Aims, Counsellor's Assessment

Professional and semi-professional (teaching, social work, nursing)	45%
Clerical - secretarial	17%
Business	7%
Service	6%
Technical (skilled and semi-skilled)	5%
Other (including 'don't know')	20%

We were not surprised to find that by the end of the interview just under half of the women were aiming for professional or semi-professional positions. Practically all of the employment possibilities which could fill the clients' need for responsibility, interest and social usefulness were found in professional and semi-professional occupations. The clerical-secretarial field was also fairly popular (17%), attracting mainly women who had worked in this kind of occupation before. Although almost half of the women aiming at clerical work were willing to be down-graded from their potential level by taking the first available job, fully a quarter of them were aiming at higher level secretarial or executive assistant positions. Business occupations attracted 7 per cent of the sample. About half of these were interested in becoming agents for real estate, insurance or travel. Three were hoping that their interest in the stock market would be of value to an employer, or would possibly help them to get started independently. Others were vaguely hoping to become self-employed in 'some kind of' small business venture. One typical client thought she would like to open a shop 'up north', but had not seriously thought out what kind of goods or services it would offer. Only four women had made fairly concrete business plans by the end of the interview. Their plans included starting a unique housekeeping service, a dressmaking shop offering instruction, a private nursery, and a specialized secretarial service. Six per cent of the women were interested in service occupations. The difference between these occupations and the professional ones was, for the most part, a matter of qualifications. Those who could not or would not acquire formal qualifications for teaching, nursing or social work, or even for the assistant levels of these occupations, were planning to seek employment as nursery school aides (5), hospital aides (5), social work aides (3). The remaining five women in this category included a future

sales representative, a demonstrator, a food technician, a tutor and a housekeeper. Technical occupations, such as computer programmer, key-punch operator and laboratory technician, attracted just 5 per cent of the women. All of these had either a technical or medical background, or else had education in science or mathematics. Some were recent immigrants whose inability to speak fluent English made technical work appropriate, at least as a temporary choice. There was, however, no evidence to show that language difficulties were the main reason for their occupational preference.

2. Kind and Amount of Education
A second, though indirect, index of aspirations was the kind and amount of education, if any, that the clients were prepared to invest toward achieving their work goals. In general, most of them could not expect to attain work suited to their level of aspirations unless they were willing to accept some academic upgrading, retraining or refreshing of their qualifications.

At the time of the pre-interview questionnaire, three-quarters of the women said they were willing to undertake some form of training or education, *if it was necessary*, in order to reach their goals. The remainder (apart from just four women definitely opposed to any further training) were undecided. Only just slightly more than a third of those who said they were willing to continue their education positively expected and wanted education or training to precede a return to work. Age was the main factor associated with this preference. As illustrated in Table 6, younger women were more than twice as likely to want further training. Even so, fewer than half a dozen of the younger women were interested in training that would require anything more than two years of their time, and all of these were hoping that some form of part-time study would be available.

Table 6 Percentage of Clients in each Age Group who Initially Desired Further Education	
Age	Prefer Education
30-39	41%
40-49	20%
50 and over	15%

The desire for immediate employment sometimes resulted in a lowering of aspirations. At the conclusion of the interview, a total of 16 per cent of the women were planning to enter lower-level occupations in the service, technical or clerical fields (such as housekeeper, saleswoman or file clerk) which would require no special training or aptitude, and make little use of their educational background. In general, their aspirations before the interview were for more responsible work, but they were unwilling to consider the time, costs and other demands of re-education or training.

3. Work Commitment

Another measure of a woman’s level of aspirations is the portion of her time that she is willing to commit to her job. It was found that the clients’ initial desire for part-time employment did not represent their ultimate objectives. The majority were planning to *enter* the labour force by way of education or part-time work, and then progress to full-time employment.

Table 7
Immediate and Long-Range Work Plans

Type of Work	Immediate Plans	Long-Range Plans
Full-time	25%	68%
Full or part-time (undecided)	12%	15%
Part-time	36%	17%
Training or education	27%	—

The distinction between immediate and long-term plans is most obvious among the younger women. Nearly 70 per cent of the women under 40 gave education or part-time work as their immediate goal and full-time work as long-range plan. Sixty per cent of those between 40 and 50, and only 34 per cent of those over 50, were planning in this way.

Basic Realism

The counsellor was asked to assess each client’s basic realism on two main points: first, on the investment of time, money and energy that her work plans involved, and second, on her personal skills in the context of the labour market. The counsellor reported that 68 per cent were reasonably realistic in both ways although some of them, perhaps a majority, were unrealistic in certain small details which were easily cleared up by information.

Recent employment experience was, again, one of the major factors encouraging realistic views of labour force participation, and any employment experience seems to have been better than none at all.

Discussion of the common ways in which the clients tended to be unrealistic has been reserved for Chapter Three, which concerns obstacles to labour force participation.

The most widespread obstacles were those which arose from the conflict between the women's work plans and their continuing family responsibilities. Obstacles were also very common in the areas of work qualifications, age, level of confidence and realism about working. Difficulties of many kinds were aggravated by inflexible hours, programs and entry qualifications existing in the fields of work and education.

The most general and noticeable kinds of obstacles are associated with family obligations. Typically, clients wanted to achieve their work goals with a minimum of inconvenience and cost to their families. Not surprising that the family responsibilities, though declining, frequently came in conflict with demands of retraining or job-holding. Obligations for care of children, husband and relatives were prominently mentioned. Also, in accordance with the order of financial priorities within the family, women were often unwilling or unable to assign family income to their own vocational goals. For these reasons they were often unable to make full use of the opportunities available to them.

Lacking or undocumented work qualifications posed another kind of obstacle. The customary skepticism of employers on the evidence of certificates, government records and work references was inappropriate in the case of these women. Their education was largely out-dated and their past employment had usually been gained under adverse conditions. They had official records to report the kind of training they had had 20 years previously, but did not have certification of the more relevant, specific abilities, interests and maturity which they had developed outside the schools and labour market. Thus, misleading work qualifications made it difficult for the women to present themselves in the labour market and obtain suitable employment.

Advancing age was a third type of obstacle. It was recognized as a problem in itself by very few of the women, but it played an important indirect role by lowering their rate of acceptance into preferred education or employment, lowering their aspirations

and weakening their persistence of effort. Its chief effects were due to the fact that it reduced the possibility of long-range planning.

Lack of self-confidence, a fourth type of obstacle, was one of the most common problems. In some cases it contributed to a passive, hesitant and defensive approach which was easily mistaken for shaky motivation or lack of ability. Much of the lack of confidence, like the lack of realism, was based on insufficient or erroneous information about work, although it was also a natural reaction to being 'put on the spot' and being forced to see oneself in the harsh light of labour force standards.

The fifth kind of obstacle was lack of realism. This was usually on the optimistic side. Nearly two-thirds of the sample thought they could get better work, more easily, and with fewer official qualifications than was in fact likely to be the case. For the most part, lack of realism did not show the resistance to change characteristic of a psychological trait, and was readily counteracted by the provision of accurate information.

Other obstacles, such as physical handicaps, illness, or language barriers existed, but these were of critical importance in very few cases. Like the other obstacles, they could have been surmounted more easily if work and education opportunities, adjusted to meet women's special needs, were increased.



The Careers Centre had an important role to play in helping the clients to assess, realistically and constructively, the nature and extent of the obstacles that they would have to overcome in order to enter the labour force at a level appropriate to their abilities and ambitions. The most common obstacles for women were combining family responsibilities with commitments to work or education outside the home, inadequate official work qualifications, increasing age, lack of self-confidence, and lack of sufficient realism. Some of these obstacles, which are discussed in more detail below, were aggravated by inflexible hours, lack of entry qualifications existing in the field of work and education.

Family Responsibilities

As found earlier that many of the clients wanted employment in order to allay their fears of declining status in the home or in order to take advantage of increasing freedom. Despite this motivation, only 75 per cent of the cases remaining family responsibilities could be expected to interfere with ideal work or work plans. For example, the part-time courses which they chose mainly to suit their family life were often not the best courses available. Some of these courses were offered at a lower level than the courses available to full-time students; were aimed at persons looking for hobbies or a serious vocational preparation; were not readily recognized by potential employers and were only tangentially applicable to their needs. Women also showed reluctance to accept work with irregular hours which would disturb their routines, to undertake such heavy new responsibilities that their job at home would suffer, and to spend 'family money' for their training. Choices were these, dictated by the family situation, tended to ignore the fact that within their self-proclaimed domesticity these women were capable of considerable enthusiasm, concentration and dedication. The most significant area of family responsibilities was related to the care of children, but obligations to husband, to close relatives and to the family itself were also important.

Care of Children

The demands made by the care of children varied significantly, depending mainly upon the child's age and place in the school system. The requirements of pre-schoolers had a different effect on the mother's plans than did the needs of teen-agers. In all, two-thirds of the women had children under high school age, most of them still requiring considerable attention and supervision. Although most of these mothers chose to regard work mainly as something that would occupy them in a few years' time, many were anxious to get started in preparatory courses or gain at least some relevant work experience. In order to do this, they had to fit the conflicting interests together in an

individualized way which would not demand too great a sacrifice of self, work, or family. The way in which this was done depended very much on whether the youngest child was at the pre-school, grade school, high school or post-high school level. One quarter of the sample had children who were not yet in school. All but four of these had accepted their children's needs as a complete barrier to any full-time activity outside the home. Of the four mothers who did look for, and accept, full-time work, three would otherwise have qualified for public assistance and one did not have her children at home. None of the clients with pre-school children had enrolled in full-time education. Part-time commitment was a popular compromise among the mothers of pre-schoolers. At the time of the follow-up interview, almost a third of them had begun or were about to begin part-time work or courses. In some cases these courses were arranged so that the client would finish her studies or training just as her children were becoming independent enough to allow her to work full-time. Evening proved to be the best time for outside-the-home work or study, as it allowed the family to rely upon the husband as a regular and inexpensive baby-sitter. A smaller number of women were able to rely upon a relative, close friend, or live-in housekeeper in order to pursue activities outside the home during the day. Not surprisingly, awareness of the difficulty of combining work plans with the care of pre-school children increased between the two interviews. In the beginning, just 26 per cent of the pre-school mothers said that they were not intending to take any action beyond investigation and making of plans until their children were older. This group had increased to 57 per cent of the total at the second interview. The two greatest difficulties reported by the women who had planned to take action, but had changed their minds, were (1) inability to find suitable part-time courses and (2) inability to find part-time evening employment. Thus, the mothers of very young children were, for the most part, confined to the planning stage of their careers and were particularly handicapped by the absence of part-time courses or work of the kind which would contribute to their future employability. Women whose youngest children had reached grade school (2/5 of the women interviewed) found that school hours interfered with most regular kinds of employment. They found their plans restricted by the problem of providing suitable care during the hours when their children would not be in school. In the face of this obstacle, the client could choose to (a) postpone her plans, (b) find some work which did coincide with school hours (such as part-time work or teaching) or (c) find someone to take her place. As shown in Table 1, most of our clients seemed to be planning or hoping for some kind of activity which would adjust to the children's schedule 'until they are a little bit older' or were counting on some kind of household help. The plans brought forward during the interview were not always practical. The number of grade school mothers who decided to delay their plans until their children were older almost doubled, from 11 per

Table 1
Clients' Plans for Care of Grade School Children, as Reported During First Interview

1. Work part-time or unusual hours and be home when the children are there	20%
2. Rely on full-time help (housekeeper, or relative living in the home)	19%
3. Use part-time home help (baby-sitter, husband, friend or neighbour)	13%
4. Delay plans until the children are older	11%
5. Rely mainly on the school (children take lunches to school)	5%
6. Other	2%
7. Undecided ('depends on work hours . . .')	30%

cent at the first interview to 21 per cent at the follow-up. Also among those who had begun courses or work, many said that they had adjusted and limited their immediate goals in order to keep things running smoothly at home. High school children posed different and generally less serious difficulties in the way of their mothers' work or education plans. At the time of the first interview 8 per cent were planning to delay, but not always because of the children. The three main obstacles included: first, the difficulty of taking on more commitments while housework was still heavy; second, the problem of finding suitable day-time education, particularly part-time courses – mothers of teen-agers almost always preferred work which would occupy them during the day but leave them free to be home with the family in the evenings; and third, the need to tie up the ends of other activities. At the time of the follow-up interview, high school mothers planning to delay had increased from 8 per cent to 11 per cent. Most of the children over high school age were virtually independent – more than half of them were married or away at university. On the whole, therefore, they presented no obstacles to their mothers' plans for work or study. b) Husband's Needs In about 6 per cent of the cases, the husband's needs and expectations created responsibilities that conflicted with work plans. Twelve of the clients dropped their idea of working in order to maintain the kind of home that their husbands wanted. Some of these were afraid that their working might cast doubt on their husbands' ability to support them. Others felt that work might conflict with their responsibility to sustain a high level of business-related entertainment, or to maintain enough emotional reserves to serve as a loyal 'sounding board', 'wailing wall', and 'public relations organizer'. Three were unable to accept employment because, they said, the kind of work they could get did not have enough status and might injure their husbands' social or business image. Four women dropped their plans because their husbands were transferred to another city. Approximately 62 per cent of the women felt that their husbands' continued support for their work plans was conditional upon no change in the performance of family duties, and another 2 per cent said that

they would not be able to work if there were unfavourable tax implications. Thus, although nearly all of them (over 90 per cent) felt that their husbands supported their plans, they did not wish to demand personal sacrifices from them.

c) Care of Close Relatives

The responsibility for the care of elderly or accident-prone relatives frequently devolved upon the older women in the sample. More than half of the women over 50 years old mentioned this as a problem preventing or limiting their work goals. In addition, several had undertaken the care of their grandchildren and were unwilling to consider employment until this ended.

The obstacle posed by relatives' demands was not usually anticipated in the first interview, and it is questionable whether the older women actually faced an increase of unavoidable responsibilities or whether, perhaps, they sought these activities because they were discouraged about achieving their goals in the labour force.

d) Spending of 'Family Money'

Lack of money, perhaps better described as unwillingness to invest in appropriate training, was an obstacle chiefly related to family responsibilities. Although our clients represented a fairly affluent sector of the population, with an average family income of over \$10,000, many of them felt restricted in the amount of money that they *ought* to invest toward a career. It will be recalled that approximately 75 per cent of the women were willing to take training if it were necessary. However, about 25 per cent seemed likely, in the counsellor's opinion, to sacrifice their most suitable goals if they were unable to obtain special assistance, such as a grant, admission to a subsidized training course or a chance to earn a little money on the side. A total of 16 per cent were willing to take education or training but unable or unwilling to invest family income in it. A further 9 per cent were judged as likely to gravitate to the less expensive kinds of courses or delay their plans indefinitely.

Table 2 shows in a general way how the level of family income affected the kinds of programs in which the women were willing to invest. Wealthier women were freer to invest in expensive academic and professional courses, while those with more

modest incomes were most likely to aim for in-service or vocational training. Canada Manpower courses, which offered a training allowance to those who required it, were popular in the lowest income group.

The most typical financial demands on the clients were the costs of educational tuition, reliable care for children, transportation, and additional counselling aids, such as aptitude and intelligence testing or special work-orientation groups. Those who did not feel able to afford these demands were sometimes restricted in their options and discouraged in their inability to pursue ideal educational or work choices.

Thus, family responsibilities for the care of children, husband, relatives and the handling of income tended to be serious obstacles in the pursuit of a career. They appear to be the source of much of the vacillation and part-time commitment characteristic of this group of women.

2. Inadequate Official Work Qualifications

A second major obstacle to the clients' work plans was their lack of up-to-date, recognized work qualifications. It was found that the measuring sticks usually used by employers – recent work experience, work history, references, immediate work commitment and the like – tended to record the clients' weakest points and ignore their special strengths. Women of this kind could not be judged properly in terms of their past employment experience, which was often acquired under adverse circumstances; or by their past training, which was usually out-dated, atrophied, poorly documented and, in any case, irrelevant to their present interests; or even by their current level of commitment, limited as it was by their remaining family responsibilities.

Their previous work record shows that they customarily held their highest-skilled, most regular employment before marriage and later slipped into lower-level, part-time or intermittent employment. In most cases their work for pay became very irregular or ceased altogether after the birth of the first child. They had consistently treated work as an 'extra' and had dropped it readily when it conflicted with being a good wife and mother. Thus, it showed a commitment much lower than they now felt. As an example of this, a woman who had earned a nursing degree 24 years ago had worked on and off for several years as a temporary saleswoman while her children were young. If she currently hoped to find some kind of teaching or administrative position in the nursing field, her recent work experience would be of no interest to potential employers, except that it might mislead them into underestimating her ability or her capacity for responsibility.

Half of the women had had *some* work experience within the past 10 years but this had not increased their qualifications by very much. It was mostly of a casual sort and frequently not in the field that they now hoped to enter.

Such uninspiring work records seem to provide little encouragement to the employer looking for stable, dedicated personnel. But it is open to question whether this record of the past should be used as a basis on which to predict the performance of the

same women once their family responsibilities had declined enough to fit into their work commitments. The evidence suggests that those who were ready to work, with the exception of some who wished to work mainly because they needed the money, had usually reached the stage of family life which would both allow and encourage them to acquire steady work habits and a keen interest in the job itself.

Eighty per cent of the clients had completed their formal education or training nearly 20 years ago and none of them had worked systematically over the years to keep it ready for use. This meant that the knowledge and skills for which they had official credit were obsolete and faded from disuse. Not only was this training of little value in itself, except as an indication of the capacity to learn, it very frequently hindered a proper evaluation of the client because it did not reflect the real strengths, abilities and interests she had developed in the intervening years.

The most frustrating aspect of this obstacle was the difficulty of finding a way to validate claims to skills which had been acquired outside the labour force and education system. The talents, resourcefulness and increased maturity acquired as mothers, community members and volunteers could not readily be translated into the diploma or recent work references required by most colleges and employers. For example, raising one's own children successfully, being a 'den mother' and serving as a Sunday School teacher did not have much value as a reference for the position of 'child care worker'.

Failure to maintain 'official' work qualifications over the years was a particularly serious problem when it was combined with the absence of specially-tailored courses or training programs for those who needed to 'catch up quickly', 'refresh the memory', or acquire certification of their ability and level of competence.

The initial desire for part-time work and reliance on it in the past, constitute another misleading characteristic of the clients' work record. The women were very sensitive to the implication that their desire for part-time work would seem to reflect low motivation. However, for many of them, part-time employment seemed to be the only practical course of immediate action, principally because of continuing although diminishing family responsibilities, and also because of the absence of other rapid ways of gaining orientation and retraining for work. Part-time work usually figured only as the first stage of their career planning. The average client expected to become a full-time employee within, at the most, 10 years time.

3. Increasing Age

A third major obstacle to employment plans was increasing age. During the initial interview, only 8 per cent of the clients indicated that age or age-related problems might limit their activities or hinder them in employment. Almost a dozen of these were concerned that their age might influence their ability to learn new skills or keep pace. Several more mistrusted their own stamina and expressed a preference for work which would not be physically demanding.

Table 2
Preference in Continuing Education

Preference	Income Level		
	Low, up to \$5,000	Middle, \$5,001-\$10,000	High, over \$10,000
Academic (credit and non-credit)	6%	17%	32%
Vocational training	36%	26%	20%
In-service training	41%	35%	23%
Undecided, don't know	17%	22%	25%
Total	100%	100%	100%

few of these also mentioned the fear that an employer might prefer a younger woman. But those who were obviously worried that their age might affect their employability were a small minority and the problem of age was not, on the whole, anticipated as very serious obstacle. Increasing age, however, was an indirect obstacle in that it encouraged a short-term approach to work planning, particularly among women whose education was most out of date. Age was consciously or unconsciously taken into account as the women calculated the amount of time they could reasonably devote to education. Younger women, under 40, generally made plans for longer-term training and careful investigation of the work field. Those over 40 tended to be in more of a hurry. They were more likely to want immediate short-term training and, likely, as a result, to compromise their goals. Women over 50, even those who had indicated willingness to take training, were most likely to enter into employment with little or no preparation, and were up entirely. Increasing age also became an obstacle for some who had anticipated it. We found that women aged 30-39 managed to find employment or gain admission to courses on their first or second attempt, if they made any effort at all. Women aged 40-49, however, averaged nearly four unsuccessful efforts. Most of them eventually succeeded, although often had to lower their sights a little in order to do so, for example by taking a social work assistant instead of a social work degree, or by becoming a 'Friday' instead of an executive secretary. Women over 50 were the least persistent. At the time of the follow-up we found virtually half of them caring for relatives and not planning any further work or educational activity. Two-thirds of the 'drop-outs' had made one or two efforts to enter work or an educational program. Those women who still hoped to work had mostly committed themselves to finding immediate employment rather than seeking re-education. Increasing age had both direct and indirect effects upon the clients' plans for work, and their ability to carry through on the plans that they had made.

Lack of Self-Confidence
When directly questioned, only 17 per cent of the women listed lack of self-confidence as a hindrance to employment. However, the total number of women who mentioned that they would have to overcome their 'initial want of confidence' or find work which would not 'upset self-confidence' comes to slightly more than two-thirds of the total. By including all who mentioned any lack of confidence, the total is raised to 89 per cent. The evidence suggests that this timidity was largely due to the fact that most of the women felt unsure of themselves on unfamiliar ground. In fact, many of them attributed their feelings directly to their lack of recent work experience or training and their lack of knowledge about work qualifications and demands and sources of information. Whatever its

source, lack of confidence tended to induce a passive, indecisive, hesitant approach, and thus invited defeat.

5. Lack of Sufficient Realism
Lack of sufficient realism, like lack of confidence, was a serious obstacle rooted in inexperience and the absence of information. Although a very strict measure could show that all the clients were somewhat unrealistic, only 32 per cent were classified as initially so unrealistic that this condition could significantly affect their chances for employment.

The more serious lack of realism took many forms. The women tended to *overestimate* (1) the work hours, salary, and level of responsibility that they were qualified to command; (2) the kinds of educational programs they would be able to enter; (3) the employer's ability to recognize undemonstrated 'latent' abilities; and (4) the value of work as an entertainment or universal problem-solver. They tended to *underestimate* (1) the amount of training or retraining they would need in order to reach their goals; (2) the total amount of financial outlay that most training would require, for example housekeeper costs, transportation costs, tuition and other expenses; (3) the importance of health, stamina, ability to communicate in English or good grooming.

In addition, six women had been under-rating their own qualifications by applying for work at very low levels. Their efforts to find employment had been thwarted by the employer's judgement that they would not be satisfied by the work and would not stay in it for long.

Older women were found in all of these categories more often than the younger ones. This was largely because older women had fewer realistic solutions for their problems. They could not reasonably make much use of gradual long-term planning, and there was little they could do about schools and employers who preferred younger applicants.

The main source of lack of realism, however, was the absence of accurate, adequate knowledge of labour market conditions. The importance of contact with the labour force as one way of gaining accurate information is illustrated by Table 3 which shows how realism increased with employment experience.

Table 3
Realism and Recency of Employment Experience

Employment Experience	Realistic Clients	Total Number of Clients
Never employed	46%	13
To 1949	58%	43
1950-1959	66%	100
1960-1967	74%	144

Almost without exception, the clients' visit to the Careers Centre was their first attempt to find information from an official source. They had been building their hopes upon haphazard impressions, so that it was no wonder that some of their expectations were

unrealistic. The great majority of them adjusted themselves when given appropriate information. In only three cases was there evidence of serious psychological distortion and an unwillingness or inability to take advantage of counselling. This number cannot be considered very high in any group of 300 individuals.

6. Other Obstacles
Sixteen women faced obstacles not shared by the others. One client from the United States was unable to enter a teachers' college because she was not willing to become a Canadian citizen. Two other clients also were unable to find employment in the public schools because their qualifications were not recognized. Three of the East Indian clients felt that wearing the traditional sari had hindered them as candidates for employment, and one claimed that she was turned away by a teachers' college because she would not accept Western dress. Finally, three women had relatively serious physical problems, two became pregnant, and two had children whose handicaps demanded special care. Five other mothers of disturbed or handicapped children did not have those children at home with them. Thus, these obstacles were very important in individual cases, but not common enough to be significant in an overall view.

Women such as the Careers Centre clients appear to be capable of a much greater contribution to the labour force than will be realized under present conditions. The majority of women like themselves entering the labour force today – and mature women are the most rapidly growing segment of the labour force – appear to be undertaking job-hunting with little understanding of the labour market, little assistance from educational institutions, employment agencies or specialized counsellors, and without benefit of receptive attitudes on the part of employers and admissions officers. A few significant exceptions stand out, such as the helpful attitudes shown by the new community colleges. However, for as long as the present general conditions prevail, the contribution of mature women to the work world will not approach that which they are capable of giving.

Follow-up results showed that a majority of the women were aiming at gradual achievement of ambitious but relatively flexible and long-range goals. Sixty-one per cent had taken action beyond the planning stage – half of them proceeding into educational and training programs and half into immediate employment. Thirty-two per cent had delayed their plans because of conflicting responsibilities, the absence of appropriate employment or courses, a delay in notification of acceptance, or problems in the assessment of qualifications. A small minority, 7 per cent, had become uncertain about working or had decided against it, mostly because of continuing heavy family obligations.

Teaching was by far the most popular occupation chosen as an ultimate goal. Office work was also chosen frequently, as were various kinds of social welfare work. These choices represented, for the most part, a crystallization of the women's initial work preferences. In comparison with earlier preferences, however, hard-to-enter fields such as library science and professional social work had lost popularity, while fields that had been former occupations (such as nursing) or were fairly easy to enter (such as clerical work), had gained.

Teaching and clerical work were the most popular occupations among clients who had gone directly into employment. Vocational and professional courses were favoured by those who had begun with education. Among these, some were first obliged to complete general academic requirements such as 13 or more courses toward a Bachelor of Arts degree.

In nearly all cases, these modest beginnings represented only a first step toward higher levels of education.

The rate of progress seemed to depend upon the field chosen, as well as upon the individual client's abilities and good fortune. Success in any single line might be thwarted by factors over which the women had little or no control. For example, they might be let down by a particular school or employer, or their family situation might change. For these and other reasons they had not defined their final goals in narrow or rigid terms.

During the three to six months between the initial interview and the follow-up, most of the Women's Bureau Workers Centre clients acquired a demonstrably stronger sense of purpose and direction. This change was reflected in their firm commitments to work and education, and in their clear but flexible occupational goals.



Brief follow-up interviews were conducted with the clients by telephone three to six months after their original counselling interview. We were able to reach 266 clients, that is, 89 per cent of the original sample. They were asked whether they had taken action toward their work goals and whether there had been any change in their long-range objectives.

Progress toward long-range goals proved to be very much an individual matter, and the follow-up interviews caught the clients at various stages. Some were in the first year of a 10-year plan, while others had already achieved exactly what they wanted. In the overall view, 61 per cent of them had actually progressed beyond tentative investigation and had committed themselves to work or education. Twenty-two per cent had delayed their plans, and 17 per cent were uncertain about working or had decided against it.

Table 1 records their long-range occupational goals. These goals tended to be flexible, at least partly since their achievement seemed far-off or partially likely to be influenced by unpredictable factors. For example, the receptivity of a particular employer or school, or the client's possible inability to manage the required work load would greatly influence subsequent decisions. To some extent, the goals in Table 1 represent a crystallization of the intentions recorded in Table 4 of Chapter Two, although the two tables are not strictly comparable.

Table 1
Long-Range Occupational Goals as Reported at Follow-Up

Occupation	Number of Clients	Per Cent of Clients
Teaching	53	20%
Office work	35	13%
Social welfare	25	9%
Household arts	12	4%
Public relations	11	4%
Factory work	11	4%
Nursing and paramedical	10	4%
Writing and editing	7	3%
Arts	5	2%
Other choices	20	8%
Uncertain, unfocused or decided not to work	77	29%

In comparison with their initial choices, the women had lost interest in library science and professional social work, areas in which they found the professional schools unreceptive. They had regained interest in nursing and office work, where retraining was available and where many of them could capitalize on previous experience. Teaching, household arts, public relations and writing remained at about the same level of popularity.

In all fields there were changes from vague notions of job content to more specific ideas. For example, in the field of teaching the women showed much clearer ideas about the age groups and subject areas that interested them; their preference for part-time, full-time or supply teaching; and the kind of qualifications for which they were willing to work. In the

area of household arts, women who had initially hoped to capitalize on their general homemaking talent or their training in home economics had managed to focus on specific work ideas such as becoming a visiting homemaker, a fashion expert or a chef, or organizing a housekeeping service.

Among the 162 clients who had taken action, 85 of them, or just over half had gone into immediate employment. Thirty-nine were in clerical and sales work, 11 were in teaching, eight were in journalism, commercial art, drama or fashion design, six were in library or research assistant positions, and two were working for their husbands in family-owned businesses. Other positions obtained included liaison officer, visiting homemaker, housekeeper, proof-reader, music transcriber, and owner-manager of a housekeeping agency. However, only 21 were satisfied that they had achieved their work goals, which meant that three out of every four of those who had found employment had taken less desirable positions in order to ease into the labour force or in order to finance themselves while pursuing educational plans.

The 77 women who had enrolled in educational programs were also in transitional stages. One out of every four was trying to acquire certain credits in order to enter the program of her choice. For example, 16 were studying at university in order to qualify for admission to library, social work or other post-graduate institutions. Three were completing Grade 13 courses in order to enter a university or a teachers' college and several others were taking a few extension courses before plunging into a full-time program.

Table 2 shows the educational enrolments reported at the follow-up. The distinction drawn between general and vocational-professional courses is based on occupational content. Courses in general arts, social sciences, languages, and educational orientation, whether at the university or high school level, are considered general courses. Courses offered by the teachers' colleges, colleges of education, professional associations, schools of library science and social work, private trade schools and community colleges are considered vocational-professional. For the most part, those attending general courses were expecting to enter vocational-professional ones before qualifying for the work of their choice.

Table 2
Educational Enrolments Reported at Follow-Up

Type of Course	Number of Clients
General Education	
('General Arts', Grade 13, Social Sciences, Languages)	26
Vocational - Professional	
Business skills	13
Education	11
Social welfare	3
Other	24
Total	77

The speed of individual progress depended partly upon the chosen field of work. For example, just 20 per cent of those who hoped to teach had actually obtained employment as teachers, most of them as part-time or supply-teaching staff. Another 35 per cent of them were taking courses at teachers' colleges, the colleges of education, or the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 18 per cent were taking Grade 13 or university courses, 18 per cent had delayed their plans, and the remaining 9 per cent were temporarily engaged in activities such as secretarial training or clerical work.

Very much the same pattern of dispersion existed for each of the other major occupational choices, such as welfare worker, librarian, public relations expert, and nurse or therapist. Office work and sales presented a contrasting picture. Among those interested in these fields, 42 per cent found employment by the time of the follow-up, 21 per cent were involved in training, and 37 per cent had delayed their plans.

The relatively high rate of immediate employment among those entering office and sales occupations was due to a variety of factors, three of which are particularly important. First, the majority of those hoping to enter office employment had had experience in the clerical field at some time before, and they had retained some marketable skills. Second, office work was one of the few fields which most of them could enter without long-term training or educational upgrading and, therefore, attracted those who were most concerned about a rapid return to work. Third, office work was the most readily available type of part-time and temporary employment, and it attracted many women who were unable to adjust their responsibilities to allow for a full-time work commitment.

Eighty-five clients had delayed their plans, either purposely, as in the case of young women who had not planned to leave their children for a few years, or involuntarily, as in the case of those women unable to find suitable employment or courses. Among these 'delayers', about nine clients were still looking for appropriate work or courses, waiting to hear whether they had been accepted, or waiting to get their qualifications assessed. A certain minority of the clients, approximately 19 of them, had revised or were questioning their ideas about returning to work, mainly because of their children's, husband's, or relatives' demands on them.

Thus, follow-up results showed that the majority of the clients were aiming, in a slow but organized way, toward the gradual achievement of long-range goals. They showed a much stronger sense of direction and purpose at this stage than they had during their initial interviews.

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